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INFORMATION REPORT

DATE OF IN

SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. Schools in Hungary were under the complete control of the Ministry of Education which was, in turn, indirectly dominated by the USSR Communist ideology. At the age of six, children had already been ideologically indoctrinated; they had learned that Stalin and Rakosa were great teachers and leaders and could even spell their names and chant them in unison. All textbooks were lent to the students by the state and were written in propagandistic style.
2. In an effort to eliminate illiteracy, the Hungarians enacted a law in 1947 which required all children between the ages of six and 14 to attend the "Citizens' Schools". This law was favorably received and was generally complied with except in some of the outlying villages and districts. Private schools disappeared and only a few parochial schools, principally Evangelical and Reform, were still in existence; instruction was by regular teachers and was, on the whole, good because classes were small. I am not sure of the fate of the Catholic and Jewish schools. All schools were free. School buildings were old and equipment was poor except in "workers" districts where modern buildings and facilities were being provided as rapidly as funds would permit. Overcrowding of schoolrooms was quite general, due largely to the shortage of teachers. Parents were encouraged to make suggestions relative to school matters, but only such suggestions as were in the interest of the established plan were accepted. In fact, parents felt that any adverse suggestions would be used against them in the future with regard to their personal affairs and the admission of their children to the universities. Separate schools were provided for boys and girls. A few co-educational schools existed but this was frowned upon, and the trend was toward separation except in trade secrets. Medical examinations of

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5. Class examinations were given at the end of every school year. These were usually oral and were conducted by a committee which usually consisted of the pupil's teacher plus another teacher. Parents were invited to attend the examination. Emphasis was placed on the ideological aspects of the pupil's knowledge. Failures were rare since the teacher and the better pupils were held responsible for all failures. Prizes, medals, free excursions to the mountains with the Pioneers, and sometimes money, were given as inducements to better scholarships. Standing at the head of the class was looked upon as a signal honor.
6. The school life of the Hungarian child may be divided into three periods; up to six years of age, from six to 10 years, and from 10 to 14. The training during the first period (up to six years of age) was the customary kindergarten type. Nursery schools and kindergartens were free but there were not nearly enough to accommodate all the children. Children of working mothers were usually put in nurseries from the age of six months to three years; from three to six, they attended kindergarten. Some factories provided such schools, but often children of working parents were left with in-laws or simply locked in the apartment. The Eotvos Lorand University, where I taught, was planning to add a nursery school. During the second period (six to 10 years), training was confined to what might be called the "three R's" in Hungarian, with the addition of the Russian language. During the 10 to 14 age period the program was expanded to include literature, grammar, natural sciences, a choice of German, French, or Italian, ideological courses, and Russian geography. The latter received greater emphasis than Hungarian geography much to the chagrin of the Hungarians. Natural sciences were very popular even at the lower school levels. The sciences were taught separately (ie, not as general science) without laboratory.
7. School attendance after the age of 14 was not compulsory in Hungary. Those who had reached that age and had completed satisfactorily the "Citizens' School" might choose to learn a trade, in which case they became apprentices and attended a special school once a week; or they might enter one of three types of secondary schools, ie, gymnasium, technical, or commercial. Admission to the secondary schools was based on an examination (which was largely ideological), the pupil's previous record, his family background (workers' children were given preference), and his record in Pioneer and Democratic Youth groups (this aspect was considered highly important). Selection of pupils for the secondary schools was made by representatives of the school and the government. Secondary education covered a period of four years; a nominal fee, in keeping with the student's ability to pay, was charged. Philosophy, literature, and courses bearing heavily on ideology were required. The physical sciences were very much in demand in the secondary schools; laboratory work was possible but the equipment was poor and old.
 - (a) Less than half of those who graduated from the Citizens' Schools went to the gymnasium, which offered the most general type of curriculum. Instruction was departmentalized and in general good. Most teachers had a diploma roughly equivalent to the US bachelor's degree, but their pay was low, only 800 forints per month after

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20 years' experience; their work load was 20-24 hours a week. Pupils who expected to take up medicine or dentistry were required to be graduates of the gymnasium. Universities accepted graduates from the gymnasium; however, pupils from the technical schools were more likely to be accepted by one of the scientific institutes of the university.

- (b) Pupils started work on their specialization in the technical schools and found it comparatively easy to get a job in industry upon the completion of the course. They could make their own choice of place to work; however, the government spread strong propaganda according to the needs of the various ministries. In 1950 work in the mines was emphasized, while in 1951 work in the iron and steel industry was strongly recommended.

It was the consensus of the staff [redacted]

[redacted] that the secondary schools offered adequate instruction if the pupil would only learn; experience indicated that the group entering the university was more poorly prepared each succeeding year.

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8. Admission to a university in Hungary was by invitation and examination; the procedure was as follows: the Director of each secondary school (a teacher with a limited classroom load of four to six hours) prepared a brief on those students who, in his opinion, should attend the university; this brief included information on school achievements, home life, and community activities. Those who came from the laboring class had an advantage. The briefs were then sent to the Minister of Education who selected those whom he thought should attend the university; this list was then sent to the university. The officials of the institutes of the university sent invitations to the selected students asking them to present themselves for entrance examinations. The examinations were oral except for one; the student had to explain in writing why he was choosing a particular field, what he intended to accomplish, and the responsibilities of a man in that field. Ideology and Communist Party reliability weighed heavily in the selection of students, and an ideological examination was always included; this examination was introduced in 1948. During this examination the student was asked to interpret the latest news, both domestic and foreign, political and economic, in the light of the Stalin-Lenin theory. He was asked to explain his ideas of land distribution, nationalization of industry, and in general the reforms introduced by the Communist regime. Those who had not been active in the youth movements stood little chance of being admitted. In case a student did not receive an invitation to take the examination, or failed the examination itself, he could seek admission to the university after spending six months or a year in a job requiring physical labor. Legally the physical labor was not required, but it had become a practical hurdle. His application would be reconsidered by the officials concerned, and he could be accepted if there was room. The university was very crowded and there were many rejections.

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9. In 1945 a new type of course was introduced in Hungary, not only to increase the number of professional workers, but also to give an opportunity to those capable individuals who had had no chance for higher education under the former regime. The persons selected were usually farmers or workers who were ideologically reliable and who showed some ability. For the most part they were older (at least 30). They took a one-year course (szakeretsegi tanfolyam) which covered only those subjects pertinent to the particular field of specialization. For instance, such people were admitted to the University Medical School after studying, for one year, Latin, arithmetic, physics, chemistry, biology, and physiology at a "college". There was one such "college" on Vaci utca in Budapest. After the special one-year course, the individual applied for the entrance examination to the university. There were few failures in subject matter in this group, but failures in the ideological examination were common. In 1951, 50 per cent of the students of the university fell into this category and on the whole they were good students. This type of study was to be discontinued in 1952.
10. A "diploma" was awarded to those students who completed what might be called the undergraduate program. The length of the course varied slightly in different institutes. In chemistry it was eight to nine semesters; in physics, 10; and in the humanities, eight. Examinations were given at the end of every year and at the end of the program. The practical philosophy of failing a student was the following:
- End of first year - Don't fail him; everything is so new, give him time to adjust.
- End of second year - Don't fail him; he may improve and the state has already invested some money in him.
- End of third year - Don't fail him after investing so much money in him.
- End of fourth year - Don't fail him now after allowing him to remain four years.
- Instructors were charged to "funnel" enough information into the student's head so that he could answer the questions on the examination correctly. The examiner was instructed to put the question until the student gave the correct answer.
- one third of the students were of sub-university caliber. There was a great demand for "diplom" students in industry, particularly those who had studied the physical sciences. Until the "diplom" was granted, men and women students received equal consideration. Thereafter, industry gave men a decided preference because it was believed that they make better supervisors.
11. Fees, tutition, breakage costs, etc were adjusted to the student's ability to pay. They could be remitted entirely for those whose parents were "poor workers" and politically reliable. All university students had to study ideology two hours a week, and spend two hours a week studying the Russian language. All those men who were physically fit, as well as women studying medicine and pharmacy, were required to take four

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hours of military training per week. The theory was that instead of postponing army service until the university student was graduated, he would take such training concurrently with his university studies and, upon graduation, would be placed in the reserve.

12. For those who wished to continue their scientific education, the following plan was set forth in a law which went into effect in February 1951. After receiving a "diplom" the student spent one year in practical work. (Legally he would not have to work, but in practice he must.) Then he had to pass a light examination mostly on ideological opinions. If the report on his work was satisfactory, and he was successful in his examination, he was recommended by a department or institute to a committee of the Academy of Sciences which made the final decision. If the action was favorable, the student became an "aspirant". In selecting an "aspirant" great stress was placed on political reliability. Often students, who knew the subject well, were rejected because they were considered ideologically unreliable. In January 1952 there were nine people working as "aspirants" in the natural sciences at

As an "aspirant" the student worked approximately three years. Courses in Russian were required as were certain subject matter courses, in which the student might be lacking. Most of this time was spent in the solution of a problem set by the professor. The report of the solution of the problem (dissertation) had to be accepted by two officers of the university. If they approved the dissertation, the student was allowed to defend it in public and he became a "candidate" for the doctoral degree. After a lapse of at least a year, some publications, and another examination, the degree of Doctor of Science was granted. The doctoral degree as well as all academic titles were abolished by the government in 1950, but academic objection was so great that, upon the intervention of the Academy of Sciences, the degree was restored after a short time. It was planned to fill all positions of responsibility in the government with individuals having doctors degrees, hence every possible precaution was taken to see that candidates were politically reliable. Since the law had only been in force about a year it was too early to judge its operation.

Under the present regime, "candidate" was also an honorary title; professors with degrees now at the university could apply for it and after the necessary investigation by the committee an honorary degree of Doctor of Science could be awarded. Those with the doctoral degree were assigned jobs by the Ministry of Education. If a student refused to accept an assignment he had to wait six months before getting another. When any ministry asked for a man employed by some other ministry, a satisfactory replacement had to be made. Arbitrarily leaving a job to which one had been assigned carried a penalty of five years in prison. "Aspirants" were paid a salary of 1500 forints per month; candidates got an additional 400 forints; and an honorary doctor of science received an additional 800 forints per month. In 1951, a regulation was put into effect prohibiting any student from doing "outside" work.

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